

Patterns of Global Terrorism: 1997



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Overview of State-Sponsored Terrorism

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The Secretary of State has designated seven governments as state sponsors of terrorism: Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korea, Sudan, and Syria. These governments support international terrorism either by engaging in terrorist activity themselves or by providing arms, training, safehaven, diplomatic facilities, financial backing, logistic and/or other support to terrorists.

The US policy of bringing maximum pressure to bear on state sponsors of terrorism and encouraging other countries to do likewise has paid significant dividends. There has been a marked decline in state-sponsored terrorism in recent years. A broad range of bilateral and multilateral sanctions serves to discourage state sponsors of terrorism from continuing their support for international acts of terrorism, but continued pressure is essential.

Although there is no evidence to indicate that Cuba sponsored any international terrorist activity in 1997, it continues to provide sanctuary to terrorists from several different terrorist organizations. Cuba also maintains strong links to other state sponsors of terrorism.

Notwithstanding some conciliatory statements in the months after President Khatami's inauguration in August 1997, Iran remains the most active state sponsor of terrorism. There is no evidence that Iranian policy has changed, and Iran continues both to provide significant support to terrorist organizations and to assassinate dissidents abroad.

Iraq provides safehaven to a number of terrorist and rejectionist groups. It continues to rebuild its intelligence network, which had been used to support international terrorist activity, but there is no available evidence to prove active Iraqi participation in terrorist activity in 1997.

Libya also continues to provide safehaven to accused terrorists, refusing to hand over the two suspects in the Pan Am 103 attack and the six suspects named by French authorities in the attack on UTA 772. Libya refuses to comply fully with UN Security Council sanctions imposed because of Libyan involvement in both bombings. In addition, Libya continues to provide support to a number of Middle Eastern terrorist groups, including the ANO, PIJ, and the PFLP-GC. Credible evidence indicates Libya abducted prominent Libyan dissident and human rights activist Mansur Kikhia (a legal permanent resident of the United States) in 1993 and had him executed in early 1994.

Although North Korea has not been conclusively linked to any acts of international terrorism since the 1987 midair bombing of KAL 858, it continues to provide sanctuary for five hijackers of a Japanese airliner.

Usama Bin Ladin

Usama bin Muhammad bin Awad Bin Ladin is one of the most significant sponsors of Sunni Islamic terrorist groups. The youngest son of Saudi construction magnate Muhammad Bin Ladin, Usama joined the Afghan resistance almost immediately after the Soviet invasion in December 1979. He played a significant role in financing, recruiting, transporting, and training Arab nationals who volunteered to fight in Afghanistan. During the war, Bin Ladin founded al-Qaida--the Base--to serve as an operational hub, predominantly for like-minded Sunni Islamic extremists. The Saudi Government revoked his citizenship in 1994 and his family officially

disowned him. He had moved to Sudan in 1991, but international pressure on that government forced him to move to Afghanistan in 1996.

In August 1996, Bin Ladin issued a statement outlining his organization's goals: drive US forces from the Arabian Peninsula, overthrow the Government of Saudi Arabia, "liberate" Muslim holy sites in "Palestine," and support Islamic revolutionary groups around the world. To these ends, his organization has sent trainers throughout Afghanistan as well as to Tajikistan, Bosnia, Chechnya, Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen and has trained fighters from numerous other countries including the Philippines, Egypt, Libya, and Eritrea. Bin Ladin also has close associations with the leaders of several Islamic terrorist groups and probably has aided in creating new groups since the mid-1980s. He has trained their troops, provided safehaven and financial support, and probably helps them with other organizational matters.

Since August 1996, Bin Ladin has been very vocal in expressing his approval of and intent to use terrorism. He claimed responsibility for trying to bomb US soldiers in Yemen in late 1992 and for attacks on them in Somalia in 1993, and reports suggest his organization aided the Egyptian al-Gama'at al-Islamiyya in its assassination attempt on Egyptian President Mubarak in Ethiopia in 1995. In November 1996 he called the 1995 and 1996 bombings against US military personnel in Saudi Arabia "praiseworthy acts of terrorism" but denied having any personal participation in those bombings. At the same time, he called for further attacks against US military personnel, saying: "If someone can kill an American soldier, it is better than wasting time on other matters."

Sudan has taken some positive steps on terrorism, but it still has not complied with UN Security Council resolutions that demand an end to Sudanese support for terrorism and Sudanese rendition of the three suspects involved with the 1995 assassination attempt against Egyptian President Mubarak in Addis Ababa. Moreover, Sudan continues to allow its territory to be used for safehaven, training, and transit by terrorists.

There is no evidence of direct Syrian involvement in acts of international terrorism since 1986, but Syria continues to provide sanctuary and support for both a number of terrorist groups that seek to disrupt the Middle East Peace Process as well as the PKK.

Cuba

Cuba no longer actively supports armed struggle in Latin America and other parts of the world. In the past, the Castro regime provided significant levels of funding, military training, arms, and guidance to various revolutionary groups across the globe. However, with the collapse of its prime sponsor--the Soviet Union--in 1989, Cuba suffered a severe economic decline. Without ready cash, Havana was forced to scale back severely its already waning support to international terrorists. To make up for this economic shortfall, the Castro government's focus in recent years has been on generating revenue through tourism. Cuba's attempts to encourage foreign investment in the hospitality industry has forced the nation to seek upgraded diplomatic and trade relations with other nations.

Although Cuba is not known to have sponsored any international terrorist incidents in 1997, it continued to give safehaven to several terrorists during the year. A number of ETA terrorists who gained sanctuary in Cuba some years ago continue to live on the island. In addition, members of a few Latin American-based international terrorist organizations and US fugitives also reside in Cuba.

Cuba also maintains close ties to other state sponsors of terrorism and remains in contact with leftist insurgent groups in Latin America. For instance, Colombia's two main terrorist groups, the FARC and the ELN, reportedly maintain representatives in Havana.

Cuba suffered from a string of small bombings targeting the island's tourism industry in 1997. At least six bombs detonated at Havana hotels and restaurants in April, July, August, and September. An Italian tourist was killed in one blast in early September, the only fatality of the bombing campaign. On 10 September, Cuban security forces announced they had arrested a Salvadoran citizen who confessed to planting the bombs. Havana charged that US-based groups were responsible for directing the bombing campaign from the United States, but it has repeatedly ignored US requests for evidence to support these charges.

Iran

Iran remained the most active state sponsor of terrorism in 1997. Tehran continued to be involved in the planning and execution of terrorist acts by its own agents and by surrogates such as the Lebanese Hizballah and continued to fund and train known terrorist groups throughout 1997. Although the August 1997 accession of President Khatami has resulted in more conciliatory Iranian public statements, such as public condemnations of terrorist attacks by Algerian and Egyptian groups, Iranian support for terrorism remains in place.

Tehran conducted at least 13 assassinations in 1997, the majority of which were carried out in northern Iraq. Iran's targets normally include, but are not limited to, members of the regime's main opposition groups, including the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI) and the Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK). Elsewhere in Iraq, in January 1997 Iranian agents tried to attack the Baghdad headquarters of the MEK using a "supermortar" of a design similar to that discovered aboard the Iranian ship "Kolahdooz" by Belgian customs authorities in early 1996. The attack was unsuccessful, resulting in the death of one person and some damage to an Iraqi hospital building.

April 1997 witnessed the conclusion of the trial in Germany of an Iranian and four Lebanese for the 1992 killing of Iranian Kurdish dissidents, one of whom was then Secretary General of the KDPI, in Berlin's Mykonos restaurant. A German judge found the Iranian and three of the Lebanese guilty of the murders. Two defendants, Kazem Darabi and Abbas Rhayel, were sentenced to life in prison. Two others, Yousef Amin and Muhammad Atris, received sentences of 11 years and five years and three months, respectively. The fifth defendant, Aatollah Ayad, was acquitted. The court stated that the Government of Iran had followed a deliberate policy of liquidating the regime's opponents who lived outside Iran, including the opposition KDPI. The judge further stated that the Mykonos murders had been approved at the most senior levels of the Iranian Government by an extra-legal committee whose members included the Minister of Intelligence and Security, the Foreign Minister, the President, and the Supreme Leader. As a result of elections in May, however, the positions of Minister of Intelligence and Security, Foreign Minister, and President are now held by individuals other than those who were involved in the "Mykonos" murders. In March 1996 a German court had issued an arrest warrant in this case for Ali Fallahian, the former Iranian Minister of Intelligence and Security.

In September 1997, Iran's new leadership affirmed the *fatwa* on Salman Rushdie, which has been in effect since 1989, stating once again that revocation is impossible since the author of the *fatwa* is deceased. There is no indication that Tehran is pressuring the Fifteen Khordad Foundation to withdraw the \$2.5 million reward it is offering for executing the *fatwa* on Rushdie.

Iran continued to provide support--in the form of training, money, and/or weapons--to a variety of terrorist groups, such as Lebanese Hizballah, HAMAS, and the PIJ. The Iranian Government continues to oppose recognition of Israel and to encourage violent rejection of the Middle East Peace Process. In the fall of 1997, Tehran hosted numerous representatives of terrorist groups--including HAMAS, Lebanese Hizballah, the PIJ, and the Egyptian al-Gama'at al-Islamiya--at a conference of "Liberation Movements." Participants reportedly discussed the jihad, establishing greater coordination between certain groups, and an increase in support for some groups. In October, the Algerian Government accused Tehran of training and equipping Algerian terrorists.

Iran still provides safehaven to elements of the PKK, a Turkish separatist group that has conducted numerous terrorist attacks in Turkey and on Turkish targets in Europe. Following a late 1997 Turkish incursion into northern Iran in pursuit of PKK cadres, Tehran protested the violation of its territory but in 1997 made no effort to remove the PKK from Iranian territory.

In November, Iran's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Kamal Kharrazi, publicly condemned the terrorist attack by the Egyptian al-Gama'at al-Islamiyya on tourists at Luxor, Egypt. Similarly, in early January 1998 the Foreign Ministry's official spokesman, Mahmud Mohammadi, also condemned the vicious attacks on civilians during the Muslim month of Ramadan (late December 1997 to early January 1998) "no matter who was responsible."

(President Khatemi, in a 7 January 1998 CNN interview, agreed that terrorist attacks against non-combatants, including Israeli women and children, should be condemned.)

Iraq

During 1997, Baghdad continued to rebuild its intelligence network, which had been heavily damaged during the Gulf war and which it had previously used to support international terrorism. Press reports citing oppositionist and refugee sources stated that the regime has infiltrated the UN refugee camps and Iraqi communities in Europe and the Middle East. Iraqi oppositionists have claimed publicly that the regime intends to silence them and accused Baghdad of planning to assassinate Iraqi exiles. However, there is no available evidence to indicate that Iraq's agents participated directly in terrorist attacks during 1997. The last known such attack was against former President Bush in 1993.

In October, several gunmen attacked the World Health Organization headquarters in Baghdad with handgrenades, causing property damage but no casualties. The Iraqi Government blamed the attack on Iranian agents. Iran denied any involvement. A rocket attack 2 January 1998 on the headquarters of the United Nations (UNSCOM) inspectors in Baghdad did not cause damage because the rocket did not explode. No group claimed responsibility for the attacks.

Iraq continues to provide safehaven to a variety of Palestinian terrorist groups, including the ANO, the Arab Liberation Front (ALF), and the former head of the now defunct 15 May Organization, Abu Ibrahim, who masterminded several bombings of US aircraft. Iraq also provides bases, weapons, and protection to the MEK, a terrorist group that opposes the current Iranian regime.

Libya

The end of 1997 marked the sixth year of the Libyan regime's refusal to comply in full with the demands of UN Security Council Resolutions (UNSCR) 731, 748, and 883 adopted in response to Tripoli's involvement in the bombings of Pan Am Flight 103 and UTA Flight 772. The bombings claimed a total of 441 lives. UNSCR 731 was adopted following the indictments in November 1991 of two Libyan intelligence agents for the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 in 1988. The resolution ordered Libya to turn over the two Libyan bombing suspects for trial in the United States or the United Kingdom, pay compensation, cooperate in the ongoing investigations into the Pan Am 103 and UTA 772 bombings, and cease all support for terrorism.

UNSCR 748 was adopted in April 1992 as a result of Libya's refusal to comply with UNSCR 731. UNSCR 748 imposed sanctions that embargoed Libya's civil aviation and military procurement efforts and required all states to reduce Libya's diplomatic presence. UNSCR 883, adopted in November 1993, imposed further sanctions against Libya for its continued refusal to comply with UN Security Council demands. UNSCR 883 included a limited assets freeze and an oil technology ban, and it also strengthened existing sanctions.

By the end of 1997, Qadhafi had yet to comply in full with the UN Security Council sanctions. Most significant, he continued to refuse to turn over for trial in the United States or the United Kingdom the two Libyan agents indicted for the Pan Am 103 bombing. (French officials on 29 January 1998 officially completed their investigation into the 1989 bombing of UTA 772. The officials concluded that the Libyan intelligence service was responsible, naming Qadhafi's brother-in-law, Muhammad al-Sanusi, as the mastermind of the attack. A French criminal court in 1998 or 1999 is expected to begin a trial in absentia of the six Libyan suspects, all of whom are intelligence officers and remain at large.)

Despite the ongoing sanctions against Libya for its sponsorship of terrorism, Tripoli continued to harass and intimidate Libyan expatriate dissidents in 1997. Libya is now believed to have abducted prominent Libyan dissident and human rights activist Mansur Kikhia in 1993 and to have executed him in early 1994. Kikhia, a US green cardholder, is survived by his wife and children, who are US citizens.

Libya continues to be held responsible for other past terrorist acts that retain current interest. Germany in November 1997 began the trial of five defendants in the 1986 La Belle discotheque bombing in Berlin, which killed three persons, including two US servicemen, and wounded more than 200, many of them seriously. In opening remarks, the German prosecutor said the bombing was "definitely an act of assassination commissioned by the Libyan state." German authorities have issued warrants for four other Libyan officials for their role in the case who are believed to be in Libya.

Libya also continued in 1997 to provide support to a variety of Palestinian terrorist groups, including the Abu

Nidal organization (ANO), the PIJ, and the PFLP-GC. The ANO maintains its headquarters in Libya, where the group's leader, Sabri al-Banna (a.k.a. Abu Nidal), resides.

North Korea

North Korea has not been linked conclusively to any international terrorist attacks since 1987. P'yongyang may have been responsible for the February 1997 murder of a North Korean defector in South Korea and the murder of a South Korean official in Vladivostok in October 1996.

The best known case of past North Korean involvement in terrorism was the 1987 midair bombing of Korean Airlines Flight 858, which killed all 115 persons aboard. P'yongyang continues to provide sanctuary to five of the nine "Yodo-go" hijackers of a Japan Airlines jet to North Korea in 1970. Of the original nine, two have died of illness, one was arrested in Japan in the mid-1980s, and another was arrested in 1996 by Thai authorities on charges of passing counterfeit US currency.

Sudan

Sudan in 1997 continued to serve as a haven, meeting place, and training hub for a number of international terrorist organizations, primarily of Middle East origin. The Sudanese Government also condoned many of the objectionable activities of Iran, such as funneling assistance to terrorist and radical Islamic groups operating in and transiting through Sudan. The Department of State in November 1997 announced new comprehensive economic sanctions against Sudan. The sanctions convey the gravity of US concerns about Sudan's continued support for international terrorism and regional opposition groups as well as its abysmal human rights record.

Sudan has not complied with UN Security Council Resolutions 1044, 1054, and 1070 passed in 1996, despite efforts that year by the regime to distance itself somewhat from terrorism, including ordering the departure of terrorist financier Usama Bin Ladin. The Security Council's demands include that Sudan cease its support to terrorists and turn over the three Egyptian al-Gama'at fugitives linked to the 1995 attempted assassination of Egyptian President Mubarak in Ethiopia. President Bashir, consistent with Khartoum's repeated denials that its officials had any foreknowledge of the planning of the event, in October 1997 scoffed at the idea Sudan could be seen to have had anything to do with the attack.

Since Sudan was placed on the list of state sponsors of terrorism in August 1993, the Sudanese Government has continued to harbor members of several of the most violent international terrorist and radical Islamic groups. These groups include Lebanese Hizballah, the PIJ, the ANO, and HAMAS. The Sudanese Government also supports regional Islamic and non-Islamic opposition and insurgent groups in Ethiopia, Eritrea, Uganda, and Tunisia.

Sudan's support to terrorist organizations has included paramilitary training, indoctrination, money, travel documentation, safe passage, and refuge in Sudan. Most of the organizations present in Sudan maintain offices or other types of representation. They use Sudan as a base to organize some of their operations and to support compatriots elsewhere. Sudan also serves as a transit point and meeting place for several Iranian-backed terrorist groups.

Syria

There is no evidence that Syrian officials have been directly involved in planning or executing international terrorist attacks since 1986. Syria, however, continues to provide safehaven and support for several groups that engage in such attacks. Several radical terrorist groups maintain training camps or other facilities on Syrian territory. Ahmad Jibril's PFLP-GC and the PIJ, for example, have their headquarters in Damascus. In addition, Syria grants a wide variety of terrorist groups basing privileges or refuge in areas of Lebanon's Bekaa Valley under Syrian control: these include HAMAS, the PFLP-GC, and the PIJ. The PKK also continues to train in Syrian-controlled areas of Lebanon, and its leader, Abdullah Ocalan, resides at least part-time in Syria.

Although Damascus has stated its commitment to the peace process, it has not acted to stop anti-Israeli attacks by Hizballah and Palestinian rejectionist groups in southern Lebanon. Syria also assists the resupply of Hizballah and Palestinian rejectionist groups operating in Lebanon via Damascus. Nevertheless, the Syrian Government continues to restrain the activities of some of these groups and to participate in a multi-national

monitoring group to prevent attacks against civilian targets in southern Lebanon and northern Israel.



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